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# Despite Missile Gap, Officials Feel U.S. Stronger Than Reds

WASHINGTON (UPI)—A top congressional military authority said Saturday "the missile gap is real" but the United States is stronger than Russia in total military power.

The statement came from Rep. George H. Mahon, D-Tex., chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee that passes on the multi-billion dollar defense budget each year. It appeared certain to add fuel to the already raging controversy over the relative position of this country and the Soviet Union in rocket power.

Mahon, one of the few members of the Congress with access to practically every military

secret, said "the general feeling is that a missile gap exists and will continue to exist through 1961, 1962 and 1963."

"But the degree of the gap is not as serious as believed in 1959," he told United Press International. "Though the missile gap is real, I am convinced that when it comes to overall military strength, we are superior to the Soviet Union."

## GOP Critical

Mahon's statement came as Republicans kept up a drumfire of criticism of the Kennedy administration on the "gap" issue.

It all began this week when what was supposed to have been a "background briefing" of mili-

tary affairs reporters by Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara resulted in a rash of dispatches saying the Pentagon had determined this country is not behind Russia in missiles.

This was put up to President Kennedy—who said several times during his election campaign that a missile gap did or would exist. Kennedy told newsmen at his Wednesday press conference that it was too soon to know the actual relative position of the United States and Russia in rocket progress.

Another GOP House leader, Chairman William E. Miller, N. Y., of the Republican Congressional (campaign) Committee, said in a statement that Kennedy should "close the integrity gap between his campaign statements and the facts which have caught up with him since taking office."

Miller said that had Kennedy been as candid last autumn as he is now, "he perhaps would have lost the election, but he would have gained the respect of the people for his forthrightness."

Meantime, the House and Senate Armed Services Committees separately called McNamara and his top military aides to hearings, probably closed, at which the United States defense position, including latest estimates on missiles will be fully explored.

## Dates Listed

Chairman Richard B. Russell, D-Ga., set the Senate inquiry to start Feb. 20. Chairman Carl Vinson, D-Ga., of the House Armed Services group scheduled his hearings to start Feb. 23.

In another facet of the controversy, a House Appropriations Subcommittee handling military construction will start a three-day inquiry Monday into alleged lags on construction of missile bases.

Mahon, in his interview with UPI, indicated that this was one of the crucial aspects of the problem.

Mahon's latest briefing came from Allen W. Dulles, director of the Central Intelligence Agency. However, Mahon did not link his remarks to Dulles.

Mahon said that the term "missile gap" as used in the past usually has referred to a lead in intercontinental range missiles. He noted that the United States now has an effective weapon in the submarine-carried Polaris, an intermediate range missile, which is considered by many equal to or even superior to land-based ICBMs because of its mobility.